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## COVID-19 public health measures and restrictions

Find out about the declaration of emergency and the latest public health measures, advice and restrictions as we continue to respond to the challenge of COVID-19. Stay home, stay safe, save lives.

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### Declaration of emergency

In response to the alarming rise of COVID-19 cases, a declaration of emergency was made on January 12, 2021 for all of Ontario.

This decision was made in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts.

The declaration of emergency allows the government to:

- strengthen public health and workplace safety measures
- create and enforce emergency orders

The purpose is to help:

- keep people at home as much as possible and save lives
- stop the spread of COVID-19 in communities
- prevent the hospital system from becoming overwhelmed
- protect vulnerable populations and those who care for them

The results of the enhanced public health measures will be evaluated throughout the provincial emergency to determine when it is safe to lift any restrictions, or if they need to be extended.

[Read the detailed framework](#)

### Related

- [Full list of public health measures, restrictions and essential businesses](#)
- [Emergency information and COVID-19 orders in force](#)
- [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- [Help for businesses](#)
- [COVID-19 case data](#)

### What this means

The COVID-19 Response Framework (colour-coded zones) is paused.

The provinciewide shutdown will continue with stronger public health and workplace safety measures.

Everyone must follow the rules (orders) under the [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) and the [Reopening Ontario Act](#).

### Stay at home

As of January 14, 2021 at 12:01 a.m., a stay at home order is in effect for all of Ontario.

This means you must stay at home. You should only go out for necessities, such as:

- getting food, beverages or medication
- going to medical appointments
- supporting vulnerable community members
- child care
- attending school or a post-secondary institution
- going to a bank
- accessing government services

- getting exercise or walking pets
- going to work, if you can't do it remotely

Businesses must ensure that all employees work from home if they can.

Do not travel outside your region or the province unless absolutely necessary.

[Read the full list of reasons you can go out in the regulation.](#)

## Gatherings

Limit close contact to only members of your household (the people you live with). If you live alone, you may consider having close contact with one other household only.

Up to 5 people may gather outdoors, as long as you can keep 2 metres physical distance from each other. You should also wear a mask or face covering.

You may attend a funeral, religious service or wedding of up to 10 people.

If you do not follow these rules for gatherings:

- organizers may be fined \$10,000
- each attendee may receive a \$750 ticket
- enforcement personnel may break up the gathering or temporarily close the premises

## Stop the spread

You should always:

- stay home if you have COVID-19 symptoms, even if they are mild
- stay two metres apart from people you don't live with
- wear a [mask or face covering properly](#) in indoor public spaces and outside any time physical distancing is not possible — you may be fined if you don't
- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- [get tested](#) if you think you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19

You can also [download the COVID Alert mobile app](#) to protect yourself and your community.

## Fines

Individuals and businesses who are not following the orders can be fined.

The set fines are:

- \$750 for not following an order
- \$1,000 for preventing others (including individuals, employees or other workers) from following an order

Maximum fines can be up to \$100,000 for individuals and \$10 million for a corporation.

Failure to follow the rules could also result in prosecution or even a year in jail.

## What is open and closed

Below are some of the key changes during the declaration of emergency.

[Read the full list of public health measures and restrictions.](#)

## Schools

### Remote learning

As of **January 11, 2021**, elementary and secondary school students resumed in-person instruction in the following northern public health unit regions:

- District of Algoma Health Unit
- North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
- Northwestern Health Unit
- Porcupine Health Unit

- Sudbury and District Health Unit
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Timiskaming Health Unit

Elementary and secondary schools will be teaching classes remotely until **February 10, 2021** in:

- Toronto Public Health
- Peel Region Public Health
- York Region Public Health
- Windsor-Essex County Health
- Hamilton Public Health Services

For all other public health unit regions, schools will continue teaching classes remotely for now. The Chief Medical Officer of Health will advise on when regions can return to in-person learning by January 20, 2021.

Post-secondary schools can stay open for virtual instruction, with limited exceptions where in-person teaching is required (for example, clinical training, trades).

In-person learning will be available for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning. [Contact your school board](#) for more information.

## Additional health and safety measures

The following new health and safety measures will be put in place in all Ontario elementary and secondary schools:

- students in Grades 1 to 12 must wear masks or face coverings:
  - in schools, including in hallways and during classes
  - on school transportation
  - outdoors during recess, where distance cannot be maintained
- enhanced screening protocols will be recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health — Ontario's [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#), will be updated to reflect the new screening criteria
- targeted COVID-19 testing will be expanded

## Child care and after school programs

Child care for children who are not school-aged will remain open with enhanced health and safety measures.

Where elementary schools are closed for in-person instruction:

- before- and after-school programs are closed and may not charge parent fees
- emergency child care for school-aged children will be provided for [eligible health care, public safety and other frontline workers](#)

Contact your municipality or [municipal service system managers](#) to see if you are eligible for targeted emergency child care.

## Additional health and safety measures

The following new health and safety measures are being put in place provincially:

- additional screening, which will be recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and will align school screening protocols
- voluntary participation in targeted COVID-19 testing

These enhancements are in addition to the [existing health and safety measures](#) already required.

## Stores

### In-store shopping

Most stores can open for curbside pickup and delivery only, with the exceptions below.

In-store shopping with reduced capacity limits is allowed for:

- supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmer's markets and other stores that primarily sell food: 50% capacity
- pharmacies: 50% capacity
- discount and big-box retailers that sell groceries: 25% capacity
- stores that sell beer, wine and spirits: 25% capacity

In-store shopping by appointment only is allowed for:

- safety equipment stores

- safety supply stores
- businesses that sell, rent or repair assistive, mobility or medical devices, aids or related supplies
- optical stores that sell prescription eyewear
- businesses that sell cars, trucks, motorcycles and other motor vehicles

Shopping malls are only open for:

- access to grocery stores, pharmacies and health care services, such as a dentist's office
- picking up purchases from a designated pickup area, either:
  - indoors, by appointment only
  - outdoors, with no prior appointment needed

## Restricted hours

Retail stores can only be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

These hours of operation do not apply to:

- supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmer's markets and other stores that primarily sell food
- discount and big box retailers that sell groceries
- pharmacies
- gas stations
- restaurants for take-out and delivery only

## Restaurants

Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments can open for take-out, drive-through and delivery only.

Indoor and outdoor dining are not allowed, except in limited circumstances (for example, in hospitals or airports).

## Outdoor activities

Downhill skiing, golf courses and outdoor driving ranges are closed to the public. Maintenance is allowed.

Cross-country skiing, ice fishing, snowmobiling and dog sledding can stay open, as long as they follow public health requirements.

## Non-essential construction

Non-essential construction must close to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

[Read the full list of construction activities that can continue.](#)

## Contact us

If you have questions about what will be open or impacts to your business or employment, call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line at [1-888-444-3659](tel:1-888-444-3659).

